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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Man Up Series: Learning and Mentor Opportunities for Young Men in Kankakee County

Kankakee, IL – Young men in the community often need positive role models to succeed. Another round of the Man Up series focused on young adult males in Kankakee County is set to begin this month. Community organizer, Rhonda Currie, started approaching local men in the community who she knew had positive relationships with youth. The Man Up series has since provided a safe place for young men, specifically minority men, to connect honestly and openly with one another.

Currie stated the first series had a lot of engagement, community support, and several young men were consistent in their attendance. She hopes to see the program grow.

"Despite being in a pandemic, we need to have continuous support for our youth. Our young men are missing the consistency of the male figures. They normally see men in school or maybe during sports. Because so many activities are being canceled during the pandemic, the Man Up series is giving young men an alternate place. Young men can be themselves and learn positive things from the men in the community. The men who speak to them talk about the honest experiences that they have had in their lives. They show the young men that perfection is not needed to have a great journey to adulthood," said Rhonda Currie, Community Organizer with the Illinois Coalition for Community Services.

Sessions for this month's Man Up series will focus on vulnerability, entitlement, health, and hygiene. There will also be giveaways. The series is open to 36 students in-person in the fourth floor auditorium at the Kankakee Public Library on the following dates:

- April 13th and 20th from 5:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.
- April 27th from 5:00 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.

Pre-registration is required for all participants. To register, visit <https://forms.gle/DiD7WGE4qG67VJYg6>. Additional students will have the option to participate virtually.

"I commend Rhonda for her work in the community and appreciate her partnership with Kankakee United as we work to remove barriers for many low-to-moderate income youth. Additionally, it is important to invite our community stakeholders to support our efforts in helping to provide resources and programming. It takes a village to raise healthy children and build strong communities. Programming such as this will help our youth see themselves in the positive men who mentor them, provide them with hope and give them tools to succeed," said Mayor Wells-Armstrong.

The Man Up series started after attending the Redefining Masculinity event held by Clove Alliance when a group conversation sparked during a Zoom breakout room regarding young men needing to redefine what they associate with masculinity.

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The City of Kankakee is dedicated to protecting, building, and nurturing the community while enhancing lives. We are a historic, vibrant, and active riverfront community. We continue to transform into an extraordinary place to dream, grow, and thrive. Embracing our diversity, we strive to be progressive, inclusive, and innovative. For more information on the City of Kankakee, please visit the website at www.citykankakee-il.gov.